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**State of Michigan and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Announce Restoration Planning Effort for
Rouge River Oil Spills**

State and federal agencies, acting as trustees of the natural resources of the Rouge River, have announced they will develop a plan to assess impacts on resources from oil spills that occurred in 2002. The trustees' plan will also include measures to restore fish, wildlife and habitat affected by the spills.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, along with Michigan's Attorney General, Department of Environmental Quality and Department of Natural Resources, are drafting a plan to assess and restore resources lost or degraded as a result of two separate spills in April 2002. These spills sent oil and diesel fuel into the Rouge River after heavy rains in the area. One spill was contained in the Rouge River, but the other traveled down the Rouge River to the Detroit River and eventually to Lake Erie.

The trustees are developing a plan for assessing and restoring the migratory birds, fish, aquatic plants and animals, and shorelines affected by the oil spills. Those impacts included death or injury to living organisms, loss of habitat, and loss of public recreational use of beaches and other areas. Restoration of these resources often includes replacement or restoration of habitat and development or enhancement of public use facilities.

Under the Oil Pollution Act, trustees for resources injured by such spills may conduct assessments on affected natural resources, plan restoration activities, and seek funding to implement those actions through the Natural Resources Damage Assessment program. Investigators have been unable to determine who is responsible for the spills. However, trustees have requested funding through the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard's National Pollution Funds Center.

The trustees invite public review of and input during the assessment and restoration planning process. Comments or questions may be directed to Dr. Stephanie Millsap, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. EPA Large Lakes Research Station, 9311 Groh Rd., Grosse Ile, MI 48138, telephone (734)692-7628; e-mail stephanie_millsap@fws.gov More information is available on the web at http://www.marineincidents.com/rouge_river.html

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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